

Date: Meeting date: February 4, 2010  
From: Clayton Beaudoin  
Subject: Northacres Playground and Spraypark Community Meeting 01

## NOTES

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### SUMMARY

1. The meeting was well attended with roughly 45 active participants. The overarching theme that emerged was safety within the park and to a lesser extent, in getting to the improved park. Relatedly, conflicting values were expressed in favor of habitat / trees and sunlight / sightlines.

### OPEN HOUSE & INTRODUCTIONS

1. An informal discussion occurred before the meeting, highlighting several of the challenges and priorities that would be addresses more intently later.
2. Kelly Goold (Seattle Parks) introduced the design team, the meeting structure and also the project history, schedule and budget.
3. Jim Keller (SiteWorkshop) introduced the scope of the project, the team's understanding of the site and the proposed concept for the park improvements.
4. The floor was open to discussion focused on three feedback goals for the meeting: stylistic and scale preferences for play/spray, layout and investment priorities, general park goals.

### QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION

1. Sightlines: Appreciation was expressed for the recent work by Park's maintenance to clear the underbrush, which is improving sightlines through the park and reducing the number of hiding places.
2. Trees: Most people expressed a desire to maintain the existing tree canopy, particularly as it relates to habitat value. There is reportedly a documented and monitored Cooper's Hawk's nest in the forest, which requires that any significant maintenance activities be coordinated with the nesting season. However, people are also concerned about how dark and shady the spray and play areas are. They feel this compromises both the safety and comfort in the areas populated by the most risk averse people (families). Some effort should be made to evaluate the surrounding trees, particularly for opportunities that improve the conditions for people, without compromising the health of the forest.
3. Traffic: Is Parks, by improving the play environment, creating a magnet that will further deteriorate the conditions for pedestrian safety in the area? Is there potential to add

sidewalks or parking as part of this project? The response was that this project does not have the funds to make off-site improvements or add parking. It was suggested that the community contact SDOT community relations to address safety issues associated with 1<sup>st</sup> Ave.

4. Playground adjacencies: The mound between the existing playground and the parking lot creates a visibility challenge for parents monitoring multiple kids (they could end up behind the mound and in the parking lot, and not be visible). Yet the mound is beautiful, fun and buffers the play from the parking lot. Might it be integrated better into the play? Or should the top be shaved off – at the expense of the buffer and tree on top?

Also, the existing playground is pretty close to the forest beyond, which makes some people uncomfortable, as the forest is a place someone could be hiding. It was suggested to provide some sort of barrier or separation in this area.

5. Playground type: The design team suggested focusing the improved playground on a very active structure within the middle circle, arguing that maintaining the existing play provides some (albeit modest) value and would be a good candidate for update in the future. The community argued that the existing value is marginal at best and not located in a good place. It was suggested that focusing the play investment on younger kids, located in the more open, center area, would help populate the park during the mid-week, when older kids are at school. The play should also be designed for year-round use.
6. Spray Park: It was noted that the wading pool is part of the community's Neighborhood Plan and it was unclear how it could be removed without an update to the plan. Parks stated that the proposed improvements are a renovation of the wading pool and is still consistent with the plan, in that a spray park is essentially the same use / function.

Very few comments were made about the design intent of the spray area. The notion of a water play area well received (most people are excited by it), though one comment suggested that because the priorities appear to be safety and the playground improvements, maybe we should forgo the spray ground altogether and focus on the safety issues. It was noted that the funding for this project is specified for Playground improvement and Spray-park Conversion only.

## **NEXT STEPS**

1. The design team will rework the improvement plan paying special attention to community concerns about safety, visibility, sunlight and habitat protection, especially as they relate to the composition of the new playground and spray park.